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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - MARCH 27

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Security Situation in the Kivus

¶2. (SBU) Near Pinga, a PARECO faction under General Ntasibanga has threatened to shoot at MONUC helicopters, if they attempt to airlift any ex-combatants from the area. This faction (PARECO Gorilla) has also threatened to attack Pinga and warned its population to evacuate the town. Another faction (PARECO Eagle) wants to integrate with FARDC forces, and MONUC believes the two may clash in the near future. The MONUC South African Battalion in the area has engaged Ntasibanga, telling him such threats are unacceptable. However, they do not believe he has the capacity to carry out his threats as PARECO Gorilla is very lightly armed, but it may join forces with FDLR forces in the area. At present, MONUC has 84 troops in Pinga, but will add 80 more over the next several days. There are 54 FARDC soldiers in Pinga.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC has confirmed earlier reports that the FDLR attacked a FARDC camp near Kesheshe, adding that three FDLR companies fled into the Virunga National Park after setting fire to the camp. Further north near Bikenge, 30 MONUC troops and 80 FARDC troops advanced on a unit of 45-50 FDLR fighters, but the rebels fled into the forest rather than engage.

¶4. (SBU) FARDC soldiers still have not been paid, and looting is on the rise. MONUC regularly receives reports of tensions in the Kivus because of non-payment of salaries. MONUC has provided food to FARDC troops near Lubero, and may extend the support in other areas.

¶5. (SBU) In South Kivu, 1,500 IDP's have shown up in the village of Luzira, but the cause of their displacement is unknown. Additionally, the FDLR has established bases between Uvira and Bukavu, not far from the road that connects the two cities. The FDLR headquarters is at Kigusha under the command of Colonel Alois, with FDLR battalions located at Kahungwe, Ndulera, Kahenge, and Mwenge, with a company at Mirungu. The units have not interfered with road traffic, but are intent on stopping any DDRRR activities in the area.

¶6. (SBU) A senior MONUC military officer said MONUC is completing detailed mapping of FDLR positions as it prepares to implement Operation Kimia II. Working with 11 trained FARDC battalions, MONUC first plans to deploy to protect the most vulnerable populations, then steadily step up pressure on 14 identified FDLR "areas of influence" in North and South Kivu. Such pressure may involve some combat, but is likely to start with attacking FDLR vulnerabilities by shutting down FDLR taxation and roadblocks, cutting communications lines, pushing the FDLR off lucrative mining sites, and disrupting transport of any minerals. MONUC estimates this

phase of Operation Kimia II will last at least three months.

Integration Totals

¶17. (SBU) FARDC commanders report that a total of 4,884 CNDP fighters have integrated with the FARDC, bringing 2,351 weapons with them (Note: Other sources state that the CNDP, which was traditionally well-armed, has hidden many guns, including some heavy weapons. End Note). FARDC informs MONUC that a total of 28,446 troops have integrated, including 6,628 of unclear affiliation. SMI, which registers the integrated troops and provides biometric identification, counts 15,767 integrated troops to date (Note: Although FARDC commanders have a reputation for inflating troop numbers, the two figures are not necessarily contradictory; not all integrated troops have yet gone through the registration process. End Note).

¶18. (SBU) The GDRC has stated that integration in North Kivu will continue for another 15 days. After that time, anyone with a gun that is not in the FARDC will be treated as a bandit and arrested or shot. CNDP sources, however, believe it will take at least 30 days to complete integration of its fighters. Abbe Malu Malu will meet with the GDRC Finance Minister on March 27 to decide when to begin integration in South Kivu.

Anti-LRA Operations

¶19. (SBU) The LRA remains active in Haut Uele. On March 24 and 25, the group attacked the villages of Monya and Atakoma, 18 kilometers

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north of Watsa, and abducted 40 people. During the same time frame, they abducted two doctors and three youths from Nagoya, just west of Dungu. MONUC remains ensconced at Dungu, but plans to deploy to Faradje and Duru in the next two weeks. The FARDC currently has about 3,500 soldiers in Haut Uele, but reportedly plans to ramp up to 8,000, with logistical help from MONUC.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: MONUC is preparing for a more aggressive approach to the FDLR, and has issued directives to battalion commanders on implementing Operation Kimia II in conjunction with the FARDC. Unfortunately, the FARDC is reverting to its predatory habits, and the situation will only worsen if soldiers remain unpaid. Moreover, the recently integrated units demonstrate very poor command and control as a result of personnel shakeups and changes in commanders. MONUC's strategy of putting pressure on the FDLR by cutting off revenue streams may eventually yield benefits, but will not completely neutralize the FDLR. It is more realistic, however, than planning combat without real offensive capability. End Comment.

GARVELINK